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## Note from the Director

Aspirations of graduate students have, by force of necessity, changed over the last twenty years as the number of academic jobs available for the number of graduates has declined. However, the value of a graduate education has grown as we are increasingly recognizing the varied ways that those with a graduate degree can contribute to our society within and beyond the university. In this issue of *Focus*, graduate students have shared the many ways they see themselves, and others, sharing and utilizing their transferable skills, abilities and personal passions to best effect, both during their degrees and after, in academic and in alternatives-to-academic careers.



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**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**

## Graduate Supervision is a Collaboration



Alison Thompson, PhD

Graduate Supervision, Chemistry  
Alumni Award Winner

The year 2018 marks Dalhousie University's Bicentennial Anniversary. We proudly celebrate 200 years of the leadership, inspiration and impact that characterizes our rich history as one of Canada's oldest universities. As we take this year to reflect on the past and to shape the plans that will move us into Dalhousie's third century, we should note that 200 years of achievements aren't ours alone to celebrate: they also belong to the city of Halifax, the province, the region, the country and beyond. Most of all, they belong to the students. As a Professor of Chemistry at Dalhousie my achievements are melded with those of students, and they constitute but a mere sliver within this bicentennial history. Yet when combined with those of colleagues and alumni we can gain

a glimpse of every one of those 200 years. It's exciting!

This has also been a moving year for me, during which I have celebrated two awards. I am extremely proud to be selected as the 2018 recipient of the Award for Excellence in Graduate Supervision at Dalhousie, and I am grateful to my graduate students, past and present, for collaborating with me such as to enable this achievement: their success is my success. I am likewise honoured to receive the 2018 Dalhousie Alumni Association Faculty Award of Excellence for Teaching. As a graduate supervisor in Chemistry, I am struck by the fact that excellence can be measured in countless ways. As graduate students base their scholarly work around research, they simultaneously juggle discovery, invention, codification, analysis and hypothesis. It is relatively easy to measure excellence if we use metrics such as publication rates and venues, yet gauging the impact and significance of our findings is much more nebulous. Beyond the use of yet more metrics, including those embodied within avenues such as the commercialization of an invention or the uptake of a new method into policy, measuring excellence remains elusive and personalised.

To me, excellence in graduate supervision centres around this personalisation of success. In striving to be an excellent supervisor, I use intense listening skills to discern why a trainee chose to pursue graduate school, why they decided to attend Dalhousie, rather than another institution, and why they selected my research group. With that knowledge in hand, I am better equipped to help each learner create a motivating training plan that matches strengths and frailties

with a skill-developing journey to reach their career objectives. I believe that strong graduate supervision must facilitate bold research ideas, embrace flexibility, encourage learning and freedom, offer frank feedback and provide consistent ways to promote and congratulate.

As Dalhousie moves into its third century, an evolving supervisory approach must take into account trainees' long-term goals and recognise that these increasingly won't involve a career in academe. Thinking broadly, effective supervisors will value the riches that inclusivity and diversity bring to everyday actions and long-term aspirations. I believe that a supervisor's role is to support transitions from students to scholars with careers. I am a mentor and a sponsor, encouraging each person to explore their dreams through empowering belief, a clear path and deliberate actions. If I can do this successfully in my research group, together we will produce and disseminate world-class chemical discoveries. That's where my goals unite: it's only with excellence in graduate supervision that my group can achieve excellence in research.

As we celebrate Dal200 and look to the future, it's worth taking a moment to note that a good dose of humility goes a long way in a good supervisor too. It would be wise to acknowledge that we don't do everything right and to realise that we each have the potential to trip up as often and as easily as everyone else.

### Acknowledgements

With thanks to Nikki Comeau (Communications Officer, Faculty of Science) for content around Dal200. With heartfelt appreciation to Thompson group trainees 2001-2018 for their collaboration, integrity, hard work and willingness to help me learn.



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### Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Resources Guide

A collection of resources related to teaching and learning in higher education. All of the resources in this guide are available to faculty and students at Dalhousie University and many are completely open access.

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Resource Guide

This guide includes publications (books, journals, articles) and other resources related to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

# Shifting the Spotlight: The Inclusion of Global Perspectives from International Students



Ziwa Yu  
MSc Student, Nursing

In the summer of 2017, I proudly graduated with my bachelor's degree in China. A few months later, I started my journey at Dalhousie University as a Master's student. On the twelve-hour flight covering half the earth, numerous questions raced through my mind: What do universities look like in Canada? How does it feel to be part of a Canadian class? Will I be able to understand people and express myself? With all these questions in mind, I landed in Halifax

with great excitement and uncertainty.

Soon enough, I realized that life as an international student was not as easy as I had anticipated. Being far away from home, I faced many challenges including a language barrier, cultural differences, and financial burden like never before. Beyond this, I sometimes felt "out of place" in the classroom. For example, students were often asked about the best strategy to address certain Canadian health care issues. As a newcomer to Canada, I had no local work experience and little knowledge about the Canadian health care system. Although I did have relevant experience from China, I was uncertain if people would be interested in a non-Canadian story. The "out-of-place" feeling persisted for a few weeks, and I was increasingly worried that I had little to contribute to the class.

Things changed completely when one of my fellow classmates, who is also an internationally-educated nurse, graciously shared her story with the class. Although the story was based in a faraway country, it was breathtaking and truly impressed everyone. As I listened, I realized that all the qualities in her – caring, resourcefulness, leadership and responsibility – are universally valued across borders. Even though her experience did not originate from Canada, it still had important implications in that compassionate and capable nurses can make a difference in patient outcomes even with very limited resources. Inspired by her story, I started to open up and drew on my experiences from China in class discussions. Since then, I have obtained a much more interactive and rewarding learning experience. I came to see my foreign background as a unique strength that gave me a global perspective on Canadian issues. In hindsight, I wish that I had overcome this "out-of-place" feeling earlier and contributed more to my classes.

Through my personal communications with international students, many are experiencing these same feelings. It is a shame to see that the confident and brilliant minds from all over the world are not giving to and receiving the most from their learning experiences. According to Statistics Canada (2016), the number of international students is growing rapidly across all provinces, almost doubling in ten years. In Nova Scotia, universities will have to double the number of international students within the next three decades to prevent total enrolment rates from declining (Williams, 2013). In expecting the continued growth of international students, it is critical that universities shift the spotlight and encourage the sharing of global perspectives from this unique and diverse population of learners.

As an international student myself, to be encouraged to share my experience in a Canadian classroom would mean so much to me. It would nurture a sense of self-worth, motivating me to work harder and give back to the class. Most of the time, the only thing international students need to step forward in class is a simple question like "Do you have similar issues at home?" or "How will you go about this in your home country?" In addition we, as international students, may feel more equally represented in the classroom if authors and knowledge from a variety of backgrounds are included in teaching materials. Small changes like these can communicate the recognition of global perspectives in Canadian universities without burdening the instructor to make major changes to the current course content. If more international students can be made aware that their perspectives are welcomed and valued, it is conceivable that more of them will actively step into the spotlight and showcase their talents and experiences. Encouraging different voices in the world to be heard not only benefits international students but also enriches the learning experiences of domestic students as a way of deepening their understanding of different social and cultural contexts beyond Canadian classrooms, which is essential in the ever-changing globalized world today.

In keeping with the multicultural values of Canada, I believe that international students are critical to the success of Canadian higher education. To put this statement in perspective, "international students strengthen Canada's schools, universities, and colleges, as well as the Canadian communities in which they study and live, and they contribute to the quality of the educational experiences of all students in Canada" (Council of the Ministers of Education Canada, 2011, p. 14). With lived experiences of studying and working in other countries, international students are well positioned to enrich the learning experience for all by bringing diverse cultures, knowledge and perspectives into Canadian universities. Increasing the visibility of international students will enhance cross-cultural communications, which will in turn broaden the

minds of all students, as well as create and strengthen new and existing connections across borders.

Similar to my own experience, a wealth of research has shown that a sense of self and place in the world is critical in the development of successful individuals living away from home (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Ward & Searle, 1991). If Canada wants to attract and retain highly skilled global talents, encouraging the inclusion of global perspectives from international students is a good starting point. By shifting the spotlight to international students, Canadian universities will become more global-minded, enabling all students to understand, appreciate and work with people from diverse backgrounds, which is a core competency of competitive individuals in the 21st century. As an international student from China, I have always felt lucky for choosing Canada, and it is my sincere hope that this beautiful, equal and inclusive country, will benefit the same from my peers.

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## WORKSHOP Building Successful Academic Relationships Across Cultures



Nanda Dimitrov, PhD  
Director, Teaching Support Centre  
Western University

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# Will the Definition of Success Change in the Future?: Diverting from Traditional Success



**Min Joon Kim**  
MSc Student, Chemistry

Since we were little kids, our knowledge and abilities have been quantified by numbers and letters. This is likely because our society has been shaped by “traditional measures” of success that have been present since the late 1900s – which typically emphasize academic excellence (such as grades) (Kuh et al., 2006). As we transitioned into the 21st century, we began to turn our eyes from quantifiable success to something abstract including

the grades to enter a program, there are a range of personal factors (e.g., disciplinary interest and career aspirations) that should be considered to determine if the student will be successful during and after completing a program. The last is that focusing on academic excellence makes it extremely challenging for the learner to reflect on themselves, as they tend to focus on course grades rather than personal and/or skill development.

During this time, I realized the importance of being knowledgeable about various opportunities, such as volunteering, research projects, co-ops, or internships. The biggest advantage that can be gained from these is that they are real-world experiences, which aid in the development of employable skills. For example, let’s say that a student wants to become a researcher. For the student, having a summer research position would be an invaluable experience because what he/she learns in the lab can be translated into a real-world work environment. These opportunities provide skills that cannot be taught by books or in classrooms. If instructors acknowledge that students can become focused primarily on grades, then they can provide, or at least reiterate, the importance of out-of-class opportunities that can benefit the development of learners and guide students down various pathways for success (Alutu, 2006).

Putting emphasis on aspects other than academic excellence means rethinking how we assess learning and considering not solely focusing on traditional evaluations (midterms or exams). Although the current marking system has some advantages, having only one form of evaluation can be non-inclusive to learners who have various learning preferences. As educators, it is important to have an open-mind about learning and teaching, and we should consider how to creatively assess our students’ learning. In Blooms Taxonomy there are six levels of knowledge, and for each level there are different assessments that can be integrated into our teaching to provide alternative forms of assessment (Krathwohl, 2002). For example, letting students conduct a class allows the student to feel more responsible towards for learning and can greatly improve communication—a skill useful for employment. The whole class can then give written feedback while the presenter completes a self-evaluation. In this way, an instructor can move away from numerical marks or traditional ways of thinking about success in the classroom, and yet still assess the learning that has taken place.

I’ve mentored several high school students and have found that not every student who is going into university knows exactly what they want to pursue. This means that many students decide on their career during post-secondary education, a time when they should be encouraged to reflect on themselves, their goals, and priorities. In the Teaching Assistant Enrichment Program (TAEP), we were asked to submit a reflection for each activity we completed. This was an excellent way for us to look back at what we learned and critically analyze how things could be improved, and offered us an experience with an alternative form of assessment. Even if reflection is not incorporated like this as an alternative assessment, if institutions or educators provide students moments to reflect on themselves and their work it could

independence, creativity, and individualism. In spite of these efforts, the definition of success has not gone through a dramatic change, and this is understandable because these “traditional measures” still remain applicable today. Will, then, the definition of success ever change? Yes, it must! But what definition of success should we aim for?

Although more and more educators acknowledge that a student’s success is multidimensional and individualized, such efforts are not sufficient to make a transition from the traditional definition (Hunter, 2006). Due to this, academic excellence is still a requirement for most scholarships and degrees. For example, admissions to post-secondary institutions, professional degrees, grants and scholarships are often heavily focused on students’ grades. I understand that there are limited spots and funds, but I find it unfortunate that not every student can be given equal opportunities to move forward in their discipline.

I received an opportunity to enroll in an elite program because of my above-average marks, but later I found out that, regardless of my academic success, it was not the program for me. I thought to myself, “I applied because it was an opportunity given to me, but it would have been better if others who were more of a fit for the program had the chance to experience it instead of me.” From this experience, I learned about three issues that occur around standards of success in higher education. The first is that I wasn’t well-informed on different opportunities that may have been better suited for me beyond my ability to be academically successful. In other words, post-secondary institutions should promote a variety of opportunities available to students and highlight the skills and experiences (beyond academic excellence) that students require in order to be successful in their programs. The second dilemma is that academic excellence does not necessarily determine which students are best suited for degrees or programs. Just because a student has achieved

greatly benefit their personal development and encourage students to find the path that is most suitable for them.

I believe that developing the definition of success should not only be the student’s responsibility, but also the educator’s. It is our job as educators to ensure that students are benefitting from what they are learning. Because of traditional standards, students are often not given opportunities to look back or critically evaluate what they have learned. Therefore, degrees and courses should incorporate initiatives that encourage students to reach their own potential and prepare them as responsible, progressive, and creative learners (Wallace, 2016). Students should not feel discouraged for not meeting traditional standards of success but instead should broaden their horizons and explore their strengths and interests. Along with the efforts of educators and institutions, hopefully these little steps away from traditional measures will remain as a legacy for future generations – that success is discovering who you truly are, not just getting an A+.

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# Preparing the Way for a Career Outside the University, Inside the University



**Sean Aitken**  
*PhD (Candidate), Psychology  
Graduate Teaching Associate  
Centre for Learning and Teaching*

PhD research should be done for the love of it. Graduate students are intellectuals; we like asking questions, we like thinking, we like reading and writing—we even like doing science. We like many things. But let's be real: We wouldn't be doing graduate research if there wasn't some grand payoff at the end of all the heavy lifting, would we?

To continue our loving pursuit of all things academia beyond graduate studies, we must

become professors. Tenure. Track. Professors. Lucky for us, this is precisely the profession that our PhD programs have trained us for. Unlucky for us, there are fewer of these jobs. And the ones there are have just been filled, and now there are none again.

Truth be told, recent statistics have put the ratio of graduating PhDs to tenure track faculty hires at 1:4 [1], which is much larger than the ratio I had in mind when I decided to write this article (i.e., infinity:0). However, for the 75% of us who will not spend the rest of our natural born lives in the ivory tower, we need to start investing. No, not in the financial sense. We can't. We have no money. But in the future value calculatory sense, we've got nothing but time. To invest, however, you need a goal—or better yet, a business plan. What assets will your business need to be competitive with other businesses in the same sector? Other businesses are your classmates, by the way.

It is one thing to come out of a PhD program equipped with the research and teaching skills necessary to land a coveted professorship, but there's a bounty of opportunity to gain additional experience that will diversify your employability skills and help build your enterprise. Imagine for a moment that you'd spent all your tuition money, instead, on starting a business. What would you invest the money in? Training? Advertising? Infrastructure? Whatever it is, if you're a savvy businessperson, you'd be sure to make every penny spent go as far as possible toward building a successful business. Now ask yourself: have I squeezed every penny out of my tuition dollars?

Before looking at the aforementioned bounty of opportunity, there's a truckload of resources that can orient you toward the skills you may need to develop. One such resource, published by the Royal Bank of Canada [2], offers a comprehensive summary of what employers are (and will be) looking for. The report emphasizes “human skills”—skills like critical thinking, social perceptiveness, and complex problem solving—as well as “21st century skills”, such as digital fluency and cultural awareness. Depending on your field of study, you may already have some of these skills in spades, but perhaps they are discipline-specific, focussing on depth of knowledge rather than breadth. Having depth of knowledge will certainly serve us well in pursuit of the coveted professorship, but breadth of knowledge will make us adaptable for the broader workforce. In any case, I think we can agree that we won't be exercising our social perceptiveness if we're cooped up in our offices “doing analyses”. Whatever that means!

So if you've established that there's a bit of a disconnect between the skillset you're currently developing and the ones you might need when entering the workforce, where can you go to expand your horizons? Over the past few years I've learned that you don't have to go far! In my own case, my first extra-curricular opportunity was born of necessity—I needed money, so I got a job. I started working at the Dalhousie Writing Centre while pursuing my master's degree, and I eventually developed an interest in pedagogy, particularly in writing for science. This experience got me working with students from across academic disciplines, years of study, and the world. Social perceptiveness? Boom. Cultural awareness? Boom. Digital fluency? Meow. I still can't code, but I have yet to meet a margin I can't format. I got the job I needed to help pay the bills, but along the way I developed a skillset that opened doors to further teaching opportunities, professional networks, and training opportunities.

But perhaps jobs aren't your thing. A couple of years back, a friend introduced me to a series of professional development workshops put on by Mitacs—a national not-for-profit social innovation company. One of the workshops focused on business writing, and having never taken a business course, I thought it might come in handy when advising business students I encountered at the Writing Centre. The workshop was highly beneficial, opening my eyes to a completely different perspective on professional communication that I would not have seen through my PhD program. Other topics covered in Mitacs workshops include career professionalism, project management, cross-cultural communication, and networking [3]. These workshops are an excellent gateway to new knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs, they call them) that are paramount in the workforce, and workshops can be attended on-campus or online.

Speaking of professional development, I should mention another in-house heavy-hitter—the Centre for Learning and Teaching. They're going to publish this article, so if you're reading it, there's a good chance you'll already know about

them. What do they offer? Well, you can get a Certificate in University Teaching and Learning while you're studying, for free! [4] Hmm... wasn't this supposed to be about finding employment outside of the university? Indeed, but it's mostly about building your enterprise, and if your enterprise is tenure-track professor, why not give yourself a head-start over your competitors? More often, universities are looking to hire folks with proven teaching experience, which is hard to come by looking through the barrel of a microscope that uses lasers. Besides, the certificate program hits on just about every one of the skills forwarded by the RBC, so you'll be able to make use of them on whichever hills you run to.

In sum, the future is uncertain, but you'd better be prepared. Don't get left behind by your classmates. Get out there and pick up some new skills. At the very least you'll gain some new perspectives and meet some great people. And if you do end up faithful to the ivory tower, you'll be all the better prepared for it.

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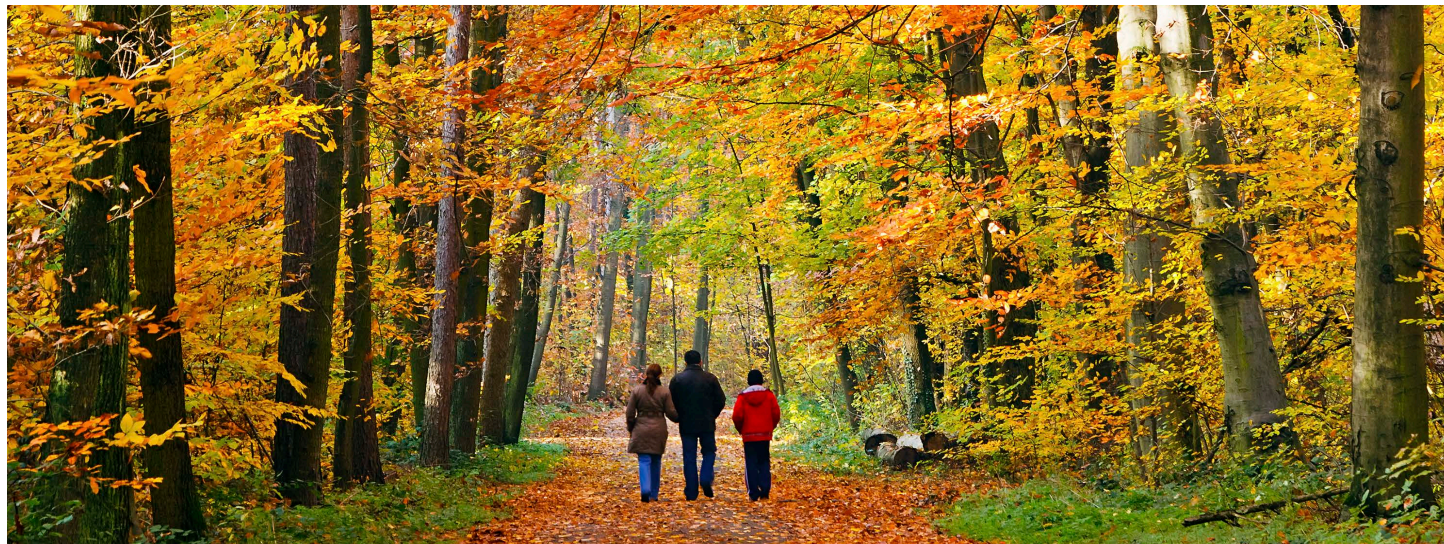
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## There is Life Outside Academia: Looking at Alt-Ac Avenues after Grad School



**Sam Lehman**  
BHums, MA

Graduate school is seemingly an institution that seeks to help aspiring scholars define themselves. By selecting a faculty, a department, a program, a field, a thesis topic, and a supervisor, graduate students make a plethora of decisions that help define who they are within the academic sphere, even before graduating and potentially, pursuing an academic job. However, all of that work to define and narrow a student's

scope of focus no longer results in a streamlined outcome. A graduate degree does not mean tenure, or barring that, an academic job. Instead of serving the traditional purpose of creating more academics to work in academia, graduate schools have diversified to accommodate other goals for their students.

While, according to the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies' (CAGS) 42nd Statistical Report from 2016, "In the last five years... there has been a steady increase in both Master's and doctoral full-time enrolments", that increase is not being mirrored in the academic job market (Looker, 2016, p. 11). Despite the number of graduate students that graduate every year, the amount of stable positions within academia (defined herein as positions with reasonable

health coverage and benefits, as well as consistent work i.e. not working on a contract basis from term to term, and regular opportunities to advance in one's department) are dwindling. Even so, the CAGS' report notes, "Full-time Master's enrolments increased close to 5% from 2012 to 2013. Full-time doctoral enrolments only increased about 2% in that time period. Typically, as one might expect (since you normally need a Master's degree to enroll in a doctoral program), increase in doctoral enrolments happen one or more years later than increases in Master's enrolments" (Looker, 2016, p. 11).

As the realm of academia moves toward more contract positions and fewer tenure-track opportunities, those entering into a Master's or Doctorate program now are turning toward the 'alt-ac' sector for an alternative to the traditional academic job post-thesis defense. The term 'alt-ac' refers to 'alternatives to academia' and is a growing industry for graduate students who either cannot break into academia the way they anticipated, or no longer want to work within the academic system as a professor. Some of these 'alt-ac' positions still exist within the university framework (such as graduate administrators, librarians, alumni coordinators, student services staff, educational developers, teaching and learning staff, and resource technicians) and are all potential career paths for graduate students after they complete their degrees. Other students find themselves creating their own businesses, drawing upon the skills they developed in graduate school to make the process of writing, studying, or teaching easier for companies or individuals. But, 'alt-ac' and these other career paths come after grad school, so how can you know what direction you should take after you graduate when you're still studying, researching, and devoting a great deal of your time to fitting into the traditional world of academia as smoothly as possible?

One way to figure out if 'alt-ac' might be for you is to at least put the option on the table. If you're not aware that your graduate degree can make you fit for more than teaching or writing, then you'll never consider options that might take you out of your comfort zone. Start off by simply taking stock of what you do

and do not enjoy about graduate school. For instance, you might, during the duration of your Master's or Doctorate, have the chance to teach a tutorial, lab, or class. You might love teaching. You might love preparing slides, or developing essay questions, but, you might also find that the process of marking quizzes or tests is not something that you enjoy. So, what does that tell you? Perhaps, that teaching at the university level, in a lecture hall is not how you want to teach. Maybe you want to work as an independent educator or tutor. Maybe you'd be better off consulting with educators about how to make their classes more engaging rather than actually teaching those classes yourself. These experiences can also help open up doors to non-traditional opportunities in various places throughout the institution that is a university.

Theoretically, graduate school instills within you a variety of skills, among them, the ability to think critically, research well, write concisely, and present your findings in an accessible manner. These skills are transferable, and extremely useful outside of the academic sphere. If you spend four years examining the cultural relevance of three French medieval comic poems, you are an ideal candidate to help any company understand and explain the cultural relevance of a new product. The specialization aspect of graduate studies trains graduates to narrow their focuses and be concise as a default setting. Graduate students also exist in an environment where criticism is a constant, and the ability to take feedback and apply it to their own projects is a requirement for success. If you are considering launching your own business after grad school, persisting in the face of criticism and applying critical feedback properly are extremely important skills.

The pursuit of an 'alt-ac' career does not have to be a lonely endeavour either. A good place to start searching for 'alt-ac' careers that best serve your strengths is any social media platform, but specifically, Twitter where the #altac hashtag is full of advice, entrepreneurs, and people within the industry who are forging careers that fulfill them, outside of the traditional academic path. To understand your own potential, you'll want to see the ways that other people are maximizing theirs.

Aside from social media there are other ways to reach out and start forming a network within the 'alt-ac' community, which is useful whether you decide to pursue 'alt-ac' or not after graduation. Building a network is useful, because unlike academia where connections can be easily made due to institutional proximity or field specificity the 'alt-ac' world is full of so many different initiatives and backgrounds. The more connections you make, the more people you have who might test your products, give you advice, attend your conferences, or promote your business when it intersects with their own. Your 'alt-ac' network could help you find a great business partner or an awesome graphic designer.

There are conferences and workshops cropping up throughout North America that are aimed at graduate students who are open to exploring their options. One such conference is Beyond the Professoriate, an online conference for PhDs considering non-academic jobs.

Another place for you to make steps toward an 'alt-ac' career is at academic conferences. Not only are there fellow scholars who just might be considering making the same leap you are there are also publishers at those events and there are keynote speakers who serve on editorial boards. There are connections to be made at events where you can talk about your research, but also highlight your other strengths in the same breath.

The 'alt-ac' career path is just that, an alternative to academia! It's not better or worse than the academic job market, it's just different. Sometimes you need something different to get you back on track doing what you love. So, be open to alternatives, academic or not, because sometimes what you think you want isn't what you need to feel fulfilled.

### Works Cited

Looker, E. Dianne. (2016). *42nd Statistical Report Canadian Association for Graduate Studies*. Retrieved from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies website: <http://>

## Local Resources for Entrepreneurs



Centre for Entrepreneurship  
Education and Development

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED) offers programs, services, workshops and training to advance and support entrepreneurs across Nova Scotia.

[ceed.ca](http://ceed.ca) | 902.421.2333

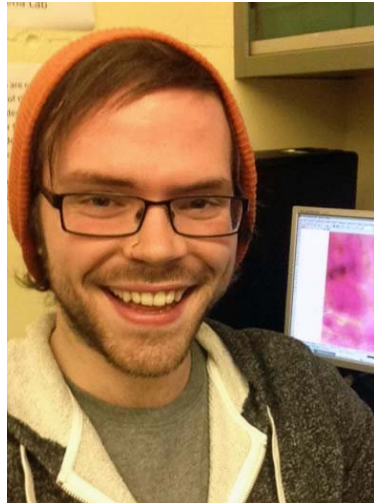
## Centre for Women in Business Mount St. Vincent University

MSVU's Centre for Women in Business is Atlantic Canada's leading resource for women entrepreneurs, providing training, connections, export opportunities, professional advice, and inspiration.



[centreforwomeninbusiness.ca](http://centreforwomeninbusiness.ca) |  
902.457.6449

# The Mutualism between Research and Teaching during Graduate Student Education



**Jacob Fletcher,**  
*M.Sc. (Biology)*

I will never forget the feeling of anticipation and excitement as I transitioned from an undergraduate to a graduate student in the Department of Biology at Dalhousie. The next chapter had begun as I entered a new frontier of independent study and innovation. A sentiment which I feel is shared among the graduate student community. I remember meeting with the Graduate Coordinator at the start of my program to go over the logistics and requirements for

the fulfillment of the degree: one of which was the teaching assistantship for two courses. We shared a laugh when I informed them that I had already completed this requirement during my undergraduate degree, four times over. I had discovered early that I possessed a passion for teaching and learning, and also how invaluable teaching experiences were during the pursuit of personal education.

Once my graduate program was underway, I continued to take on teaching assistantships within the department even though they weren't a requirement. These included a wide range of courses, spanning all years of study and disciplines. My supervisor was supportive of my teaching endeavours, which empowered me to learn, grow, share my knowledge, and establish a marriage between my research and teaching. Teaching became a part of my everyday life and conversation throughout my studies. It was also great to have been a TA for the course my supervisor taught as this allowed us to share experiences and have her mentor me through teaching methods aimed at enhancing the students' learning experience. My graduate research became an integral part of my teaching in a couple of courses for which I was a member of the teaching team. This yearning to share knowledge provided me with confidence and the desire to seek other opportunities, such as presenting at conferences, coaching high school students in science projects, judging science fairs, and assuming leadership roles in the biology graduate student society. Collectively, I feel that these endeavours contributed tremendously to both the development and growth of my skills as a graduate student, as well as my overall enjoyment of my program.

It is my belief that teaching experience can substantially benefit graduate student development. Skills learned at the front of a lab or classroom are transferable to the development of our confidence and communication, and provide an opportunity to meet students and other faculty. This networking is a great way to establish yourself within the academic community and may help with future employment opportunities. Every position I've held at Dalhousie has somehow been obtained through word-of-mouth and recommendations between colleagues. Enveloping one's self in research can isolate you from the bigger picture of the university experience. It is important not only for graduate students to make connections within the community and gain experience in leadership roles but it is equally important to expose our undergraduates to leadership from graduate students. This allows them to see what opportunities are available during graduate school, and potentially inspires them to travel a similar path.

An additional value that teaching can contribute to our research comes in the assessment of our teaching. Presentations and the act of communicating our message is an important element of graduate student success, and feedback on our teaching directly impacts the development of this skill. The feedback we receive from students on our teaching - content delivery, clarity, and knowledge - can be useful when preparing for admission to candidacy exams, a thesis defense, and research-based poster and/or oral presentations. Student Ratings of Instruction (SRIs) can be an effective evaluation of our social skills in an academic setting. These skills can be improved upon through self-reflection embedded in our own teaching practices, and can further be integrated into the development of graduate students.

During the final year of my MSc, I acquired a position as the Graduate Teaching Associate for the Centre for Learning and Teaching. This opportunity allowed me to expand my horizon in teaching, combining elements of both teaching and research to investigate the scholarship of teaching and learning. It was an experience that encompassed the best of both worlds. Through this position, I was able to delve into educational literature and conduct workshops for teaching assistants and graduate students across the university. Just as we learn from our students in teaching, I was able to learn substantially from student leaders in our institution's teaching community, as we discussed topics and concerns in higher education that we experienced in our own classrooms. The scholarship of teaching and learning introduced me to a new relationship between research and teaching, and one that helped me contextualize my previous educational experiences in a way I hadn't before. It filled in a missing piece of the puzzle of why we do what we do as teaching assistants and researchers alike. For example, opportunities offered by the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Dalhousie that aim to support your growth of graduate students:

teaching development (e.g., the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (TAEP)) allow students to explore the theory behind why we teach the way we do in a university setting. Working at the CLT opened up an entire community outside of my department that was there to support me in my teaching development, and embracing opportunities to engage with other graduate students outside of my discipline, from across the university, was a rewarding experience that provided me with a sense of community and belonging.

One of the main messages that I wish to emphasize is the importance in being a well-balance student. The personal development and growth we go through is only constrained by the limitations we set on our own opportunities. Teaching experiences are invaluable for our skillset as academics, and our research has equal potential to contribute to

our teaching through our passion and inspiration. Both research and teaching, when combined into a single force, exponentially contribute to our potential as role models and mentors within the Dalhousie community. There are many important partnerships throughout a Graduate program. The relationship between you and your students, your supervisor, your peers and colleagues, the communicative dialogue between your studies and the public, and the shared learning that occurs between all of the relationships above. There is, however, one mutualistic relationship that I feel is often underestimated, and that is the invaluable collaboration of both our research and teaching experiences in tandem, to ultimately achieve our full potential as an academic and inspire the future of higher education.

## Creating a Teaching Dossier

TWO-PART GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOP

For More Information and to Register for this FREE Workshop, Visit [dal.ca/CLT](http://dal.ca/CLT)

### Presenter: Dr. Jill McSweeney

A teaching dossier is a critical component for any academic job search, and yet we often do not consider the time and work it takes to develop a dossier that reflects the experience, values, and evidence of our teaching. This two-part workshop covers the fundamentals of a teaching dossier (e.g., teaching philosophy, student evaluations, teaching materials), and will provide you with an opportunity to start developing the foundations to your own dossier.

Please note: Participants who register for this workshop are expected to fully participate in both sessions, including preparing a teaching philosophy for the second day.



### Day One

Thursday, November 1  
10 a.m. - noon  
B400, Killam Library

During Day 1, you'll receive information and resources for effectively presenting your teaching values, experiences, and evidence in a teaching dossier. The goal of Day 1 will be to present the role of a teaching dossier, its value to your future employment, and to begin to draft your own teaching philosophy.

### Day Two

Thursday, November 8  
10 a.m. - noon  
B400, Killam Library

During Day 2, we will learn more about the individual components within a dossier and the evidence that you can start collecting that can represent your teaching practice and development. We will provide time to review a draft of your own teaching philosophy and start forming the foundation of your own dossier. Attendees are expected to bring a draft of a teaching philosophy to exchange with peers and receive feedback.

## Looking to Add to your Co-Curricular Record?

Enroll in the Teaching and Learning Enrichment Program (TAEP) and receive a CCR annotation upon completion.

### Emily Blacklock

**Program:** Marine Biology

**Year:** 2

**Involvements:** Dalhousie Sailing (*Recreational Sailing Coordinator and Recreational Sailor*), Dalhousie Masters Swimming (*Swimmer and Executive Member*), Dalhousie Marine Biology Society (*Member*), Dal Scuba (*Member and Executive*), Dal Kings Swim Society (*VP of Womens Only Swimming and Member*), and O Week (*Leader*).



# SOCIETY LEADER

Get your experience on *the* record  
[dal.ca/ccr](http://dal.ca/ccr)



### For More Information, Contact:

Centre for Learning and Teaching  
Dalhousie University  
Killam Memorial Library, Suite G90  
Email: [clt@dal.ca](mailto:clt@dal.ca) | Phone: (902) 494-1622  
[www.dal.ca/CLT](http://www.dal.ca/CLT)

# Fall 2018 Workshop Schedule

All Workshops are FREE

For More Information and Workshop Registration, Visit [dal.ca/CLT](http://dal.ca/CLT)

### Enhancing Assessment and Feedback

*Dr. Carol Evans, Chair, Higher Education  
University of Southhampton*  
September 27 | noon-1:30 pm  
B400, Killam Library

### Creating Learning Outcomes

*Dr. Susan Joudrey & Chad O'Brien*  
October 11 | 11:30 am - 1 pm  
B400, Killam Library

### Supervising Across Cultures

*Dr. Nanda Dimitrov, Western University*  
October 4 | 9:30 am - 12:00 pm  
MacDonald Building, University Hall

### Exploring Heteronormativity in the Classroom: Towards Queer Inclusivity

*Phillip Joy, PhD Candidate*  
October 22 | 10:00 - 11:30 am  
B400, Killam Library

### Building Successful Academic Relationships Across Cultures

*Dr. Nanda Dimitrov, Western University*  
October 4 | 2:00 - 4:30 pm  
MacDonald Building, University Hall

### User Experience Considerations for Delivering Online Content

*Sean Aitken, PhD Candidate*  
October 24 | 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
B400, Killam Library

### Free Speech in the Classroom

*Sean Aitken, PhD Candidate*  
October 4 | 3:00 - 4:30 pm  
B400, Killam Library

### Can Findings from Educational Neuroscience Inform Our Teaching Practices?

*Sean Aitken, PhD Candidate*  
November 27 | 2:00 - 4:00 pm  
B400, Killam Library





# Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase 2018

Engaging Learners through Experiential and  
High Impact Practices in Higher Education

Saturday, October 20, 2018  
Haley Institute  
Dalhousie Agricultural Campus

Truro, Nova Scotia

Register at [dal.ca/CLT](http://dal.ca/CLT)



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